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SUBJECT: CHAD:EU TEAM ASKS HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT PROPOSED
FORCE IN EAST

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: After the week-long visit of a European Commission Technical Assessment Team, many questions were still unanswered as to how a possible multidimensional UN/EU force would go about protecting refugees, IDPs and humanitarian workers in eastern Chad given the complex political and security dynamic in the region. UN and NGO representatives reiterated the support of the humanitarian community for the proposed force, but stressed that it must remain strictly neutral and mindful of the distinction between military and humanitarian mandates. One Chadian rebel group has denounced the proposed force and there is concern that humanitarian actors - who are now not targets - might become so. Team Leader General A.D. Leakey agreed that neutrality in the face of a complex internal conflict was vital for the credibility of the international force but stressed that a robust mandate to back up its credibility was also required. End Summary.

12. (SBU) General A.D. Leakey led a European Commission fact-finding team for a week-long visit to Chad to gain a better understanding of how a possible multidimensional force could perform the triple task of protecting refugees and Internally Displace Persons (IDPs), protecting humanitarian workers and operations, and securing the environment sufficiently for IDPs to feel safe to return home. In an August 26 meeting with NGOs, UN agencies and diplomatic representatives and in subsequent briefings attended by PolOff and DATT, General Leakey explained that the purpose of his visit was to listen and ask questions. Throughout his presentation he emphasized that the multidimensional force was still only a "possibility." (Comment: This caution reflects EU concern that no commitment be made before the passage of a UN Security Council Resolution which would lay out an exit strategy for the EU force. End Comment).

13. (U) UNDP representative Kingsley Amaning led off with a somber picture of conditions in eastern Chad, stating that the greatest concern of humanitarian workers was the insecurity which prevented them from carrying out their work. The situation in the east was volatile and dangerous, and competition over increasingly scarce land resources provided the fuel for continued inter-communal tensions. The Government of Chad was unable to assure security. He welcomed the Secretary-General's concept for creating a safe humanitarian operational space in eastern Chad, but noted that the force was far too long in coming given that the alarm had been sounded months ago.

14. (U) Amaning cautioned that the force presence should not lead to any "aggravation of the political climate." He noted that, up to now, no armed rebel group had threatened humanitarian workers; the biggest danger for the latter was being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Humanitarians must not become targets as a result of perceived political affiliation. (Comment: One Chadian rebel group has publicly

denounced the proposed force as an effort by the international community to prop up President Deby's regime. End comment.) He also stressed that a clear distinction must be maintained between the functions and roles of humanitarian and military personnel in order not to compromise the perception of neutrality and impartiality of the humanitarian actors.

15. (SBU) General Leakey responded that the force would have to be potent and credible. A robust mandate was necessary - the force would not be "humiliated" or "pushed into a corner." While certain no-go areas were being discussed (such as a 10 kilometer ring around the refugee camps and by the border), the force would still need to enjoy the right of hot pursuit. He acknowledged the need not to mix humanitarian and military functions, but also argued that the force was there to win hearts and minds and to be seen as doing good. They would seek such opportunities - such as allowing the local population access to military hospitals - as appropriate.

16. (SBU) General Leakey asked interlocutors to help him understand who the force was protecting "and against whom" and how this could be done without treading on local authorities. Other than showing a credible military presence (deterrence), what did the humanitarian community want from such a force in the event of inter-ethnic fighting or rebel attacks? He added that if the force's presence failed as a deterrent, the force would be obliged to "do something."

17. (SBU) ECHO representative Frederic Bonamy pointed out that creating zones of security would have the perverse effect of amplifying insecurity. For instance, if the areas around the IDP and refugee camps were protected, the force would not be

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able to provide the credible presence elsewhere that would persuade the IDPs that it was safe to return home. In other words, the force needed to go "where people were leaving" rather than "where they have gone to." He underscored the difficulty of knowing how to respond appropriately to security incidents. Often the instigators wore a Chadian uniform, or were local authorities appropriating vehicles or turning a blind eye to harassment and theft. He stressed that clear rules of engagement were needed. ICRC representative Tomas Merkelbach asked how a force should respond to a situation such as the simmering conflict between Zaghawa and Tama in the Guereda area. Responding to a question from General Leakey as to whether the multinational force should be operating in conjunction with the Chadian army, participants commented variously that the ANT was "discredited" and "part of the problem."

18. (SBU) Concerning the zone of operation, General Leakey informed the group that the preliminary thinking was that the force would operate in the south only. Having the EU force in the north ran the risk of "exacerbating the situation" and interposing a force between disputing parties. Furthermore, Chadian authorities had imposed the pre-condition that the international force would not operate on the border and the northern camps were virtually straddling the border. And finally, he noted that they did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of Chad, and that the government was more present in the north than in the south. However, UN gendarmes and the newly-trained Chadian gendarmes would operate in the north in towns and near camps.

19. (SBU) In closing, Leakey stressed that the operation was not a "transitional administration" and did not replace the functions of the Chadian state. The force was there to assist with the humanitarian situation - it was not a long-term solution to the political and security problems in Chad. Clearly gendarmes would not be able to solve all of the law and order problems that arose. However, the presence of the multinational force plus the gendarmes would hopefully provide some stability.

Operational details

¶10. (SBU) Queried on timing, Leakey said that if the EU accepts the recommendations of the technical team and if we can force generate, then it is very likely that the first elements would arrive in October and be complete by year's end. The military component of the operation would be in country in advance of the UN-trained Chadian gendarmes. According to the UN team member, the first tranche of Chadian gendarmes would be trained and deployed with their UN counterparts with a force generation goal of 200 per month for a total of 850 gendarmes by early 2008. UN police would be responsible for recruitment, training and mentoring of the selected gendarmes known as Police Chadian pour la Protection Humanitaire (PTPH), but the PTPH would fall under national authority. The PTPH would also be ethnically diverse. The Chadian gendarme force would be deployed around the refugee camps, IDP concentrations and civilian populations. When asked to better explain the relationship between the police component and the EU force, Leakey responded that a precondition for the deployment of the police was having an EU force already present.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) In late 2006 N'Djamena anticipated the difficulties that any international force would have in negotiating the complicated political security climate in eastern Chad. Our recommendation then: "protect the good guys" still stands. However, with the growth of the IDP population, and the addition of a mandate to provide a security umbrella beyond the refugee camps and the humanitarian operations, the complexity of this operation becomes even greater and the General's question as to who he would need to protect -- and from what -- is not easy to answer. In addition, the focus on patrolling southeastern Chad raises concerns that reduced attention to the northeast could erode confidence in the peacekeeping force's neutrality as well as create a security vacuum in that region.

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